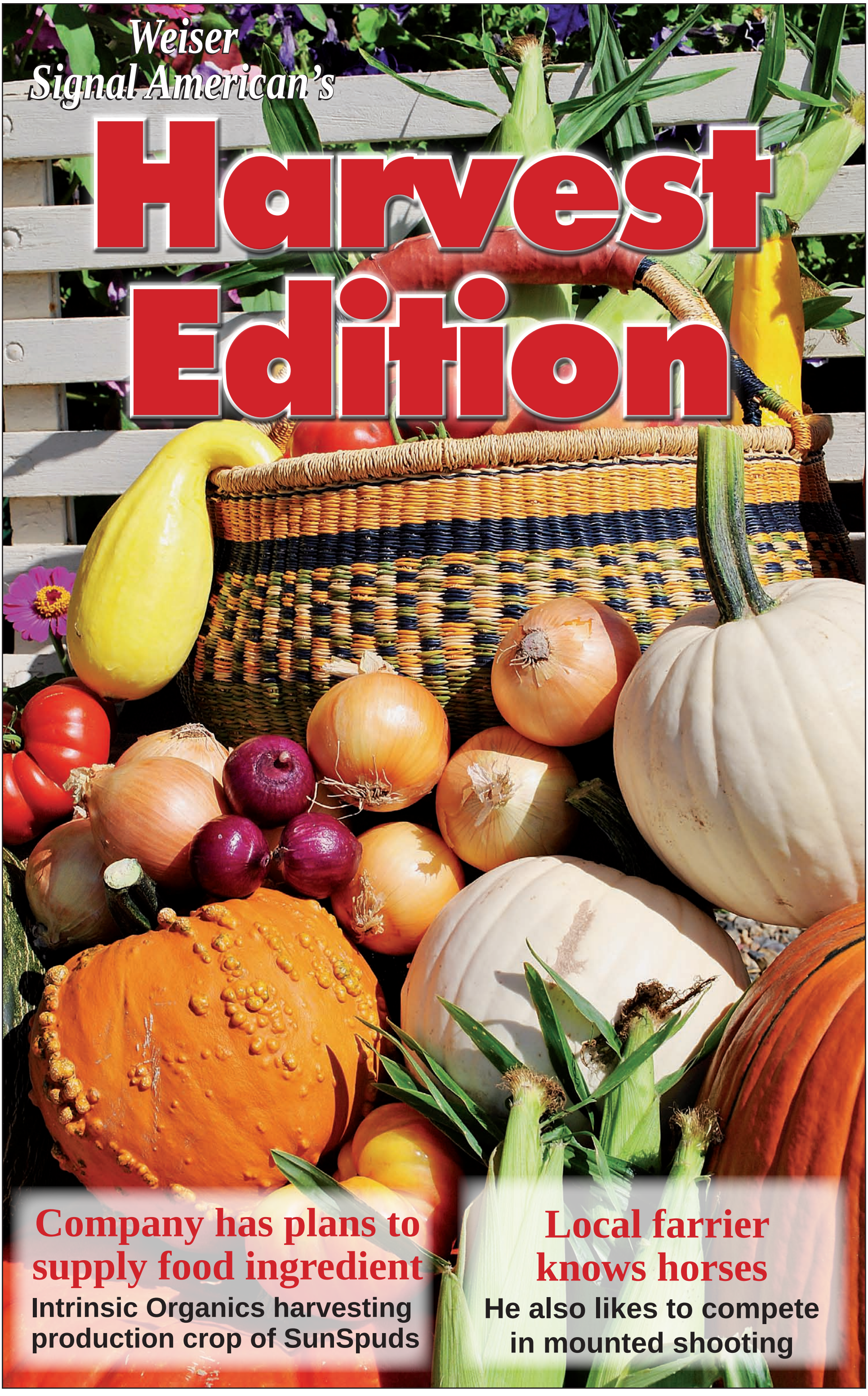
Weiser Signal American's

Harvest Edition



Company has plans to supply food ingredient

Intrinsic Organics harvesting production crop of SunSpuds

Local farrier knows horses

He also likes to compete in mounted shooting

Other than a late heatwave of 100-plus degrees in August, local onion growers had a pretty good season. They were able to plant early this year and harvest was about a week or two early. The crop appears to be average or slightly above average in yields and onions have sized well. The southwest Idaho-Eastern Oregon region is famous for its sweet yellow spanish onions.

Local onion growers could see above average harvest

Reports from the field indicate size and quality are good

by Steve Lyon

The onion harvest started about a week early this year for growers in the western Treasure Valley and many were done in the fields by the first week in October.

Growing conditions were pretty good this summer, except for a week of triple digit-temperatures in August that slowed the crop, and yields are expected to be average or slightly above.

The quality of this year's crop of sweet Spanish onions should be good and they may size larger than last year.

Growers plant about 21,000 acres of onions every year between southwest Idaho and southeastern Oregon. The region ships one billion pounds of onions annually all over.

Local onion packers like Haun Packing in Weiser will be packing and shipping this year's crop until next March. Growers with onions in refrigerated storage can extend the packing season until May.

Haun said the price that onions bring is like any other commodity – it is driven by supply and demand. Demand was strong for early season onions in August and into September.

As more packing companies started up for the season and put more onions on the market in September, the prices began to soften. He works with 10 or so local onion growers that supply the crop.

"We're hoping the yields around the valley are not as big as everybody is thinking they might be," Haun said.

Most Treasure Valley growers reported average yields with onion sizes favoring jumbo to colossal. Quality is good; however, early onions did not cure as well as normal due to a dip in temperatures in early harvest.

Onion prices are lower than a year ago but higher than two years ago. Demand is strong, primarily driven by supply and quality. There is some optimism that prices will increase as the season continues, according to the Northwest Farm Credit Services Market Snapshot.

Once the packers and shippers know what this year's crop yield looks like, and what they have in storage to sell they will have a better sense of what needs to be shipped every week.

Yellow onions are sold in 50-pound bags, which were bringing $6.50 in early September and then the market softened. The price dropped to $5.50 to $6 for a bag. Anything from $7 and up is profitable. Below $7 is questionable about making a profit.

"We're hoping it may go back up," Haun said.

Reds and whites don't yield as good for growers, but there is usually a little higher price paid for them. Whites are probably bringing the best price right now. About 70-80 percent of what is shipped out of the valley are the jumbo-sized and medium yellow onions.

Local onions are mostly shipped to buyers in the U.S. and Canada, although valley onions were exported to Honduras for the first time last year. Washington state onion growers are closer to the coast and ports and do some business with Japan and China.

"On the world market there are other countries that have had some growing problems. So there is the possibility of a little more export than normal," Haun said, between sales calls from his Weiser office.

see ***ONIONS,*** *Page 3*

Most Weiser-area growers are done with the onion harvest this year. Above, onions at the Nakamura Farms go from the field to a truck to storage. Below, onion harvest is a busy week or two for local growers.

The produce industry conducted business by verbal commitment for years. These days, technology is a big part of how buying and selling is done. Orders come in by email and pricing and automatic confirmations go out by email.

The past couple of years have seen wide swings in onion prices. The 2016 crop didn't make anybody rich as prices were some of the lowest seen in a few years. Shippers were getting $3 to $5 for a 50-pound bag.

In 2017, due to a short growing season and smaller crop and smaller sized-onions, packers and shippers were getting up to $9 for a 50-pound bag of yellow onions. Some reported getting a little more, up to $10 for a 50-pound bag, and some said a little less.

Even though prices were good last year, it took all of the crop a grower had to make money with the reduced yields in both quantity and onion size.

Certified weed-free hay available throughout Idaho

The Idaho Hay and Forage Association annually publishes a directory that includes the names and contact information for hay and forage producers in the Gem State.

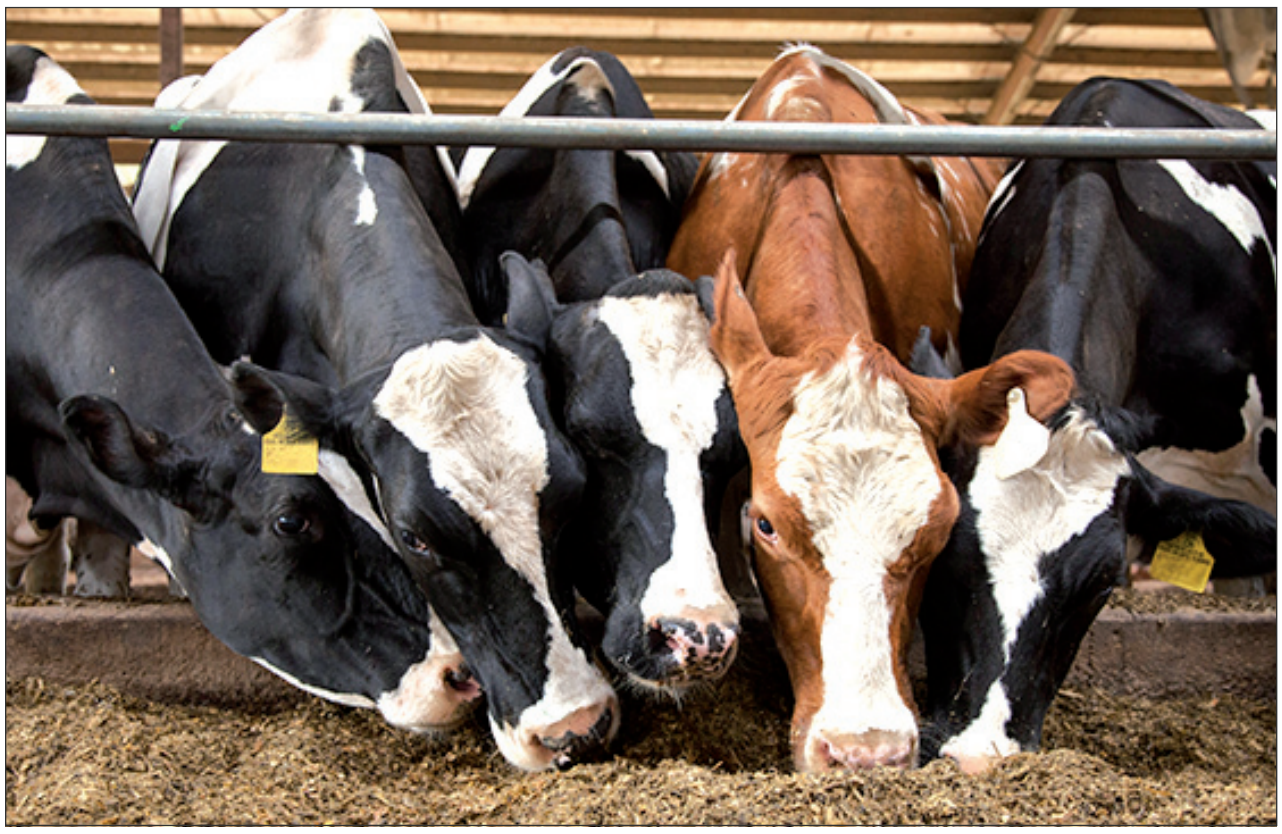
The directory divides producers into four regions of the state and lists the size of bales available for sale. The sizes include half-ton bales, three-quarter-ton bales, one-ton bales, two-string bales, three-string bales, cubed and round bales.

In addition, the directory also classifies hay in two important categories for specialty hay production – organic hay and certified weed-free hay.

The directory is a great source for identifying where to secure certified weed-free hay for this time of the year as hunting season ramps up.

"Certified weed-free hay is required on many federal and state lands in Idaho," Executive Director Rick Waitley said. "Those planning to pack, hunt or enjoy the backcountry need to be sure that the hay they are packing for their excursion is certified weed free."

There is no cost for the directory and a copy of it can be obtained by calling 208-888-0988 or by emailing lisa@amgidaho.com.



Dairies and beef cattle feedlots are the most common CAFOs in Idaho. Washington County's lack of a single dairy has raised the issue of whether the county's CAFO zoning rules are too restrictive. County commissioners are working with the planning and zoning department on possible revisions to the ordinance. A public hearing would be required to change the ordinance. ***Courtesy photo***

County officials plan to review ordinance governing CAFOs

County zoning regulations are too restrictive, one rancher says

by Steve Lyon

Washington County commissioners have agreed to look at the county's zoning ordinance regulating confined animal feeding operations (CAFO) to see if it's too restrictive or is in need of revisions.

Issues with the county's ordinance on CAFOs, which was last revised in 2005, were raised by Washington County's Farm Bureau president and rancher Tristan Winegar, who said those kinds of agicultural operations should be encouraged to locate in the county, but it is all but impossible to do with the current regulations.

Local farm bureau officials have met with county commissioners and also with county planning and zoning to discuss the existing CAFO regulations and whether they are a hindrance to agriculture industries. There is no timeline on revising the county ordinance covering CAFOs.

"There are various things throughout the ordinance that we see as restrictive or not necessary," Winegar said. "It basically restricts it to the point that nobody can do a CAFO."

The county defines CAFOs as a parcel of land that does not grow crops and where there are 500 or more animals housed in one place for 90 days or more in a year. Typically, CAFOs in Idaho are either beef cattle in a feedlot or a dairy, but they can be other animals.

Winegar said the county at one time had numerous operating dairies, but there is not a single one operating today. There is plenty of feed grown in the county that is currently shipped out, such as hay and corn, that could support CAFOs.

"It would boost our economy and it would help us out with our commodity prices," he said.

The county's zoning laws seek to head off potiental conflicts between CAFOs and residential development in the county. The regulations also were drafted and approved to protect groundwater and surface water in the county from waste runoff. There are parts of the county that the state has determined to be nitrate areas of concern.

CAFOs are already regulated by the state concerning animal waste and nutrient management plans, Winegar said, and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and Department of Agriculture would be involved in permitting of any dairy in the county. With state laws already in place on CAFOs, the county ought to defer to those rather than adding even more regulations.

"We already have to go through the state to do anything anyways," he said.

The county ordinance is more restrictive than the state regulations when it comes to siting a CAFO. The county ordinance does not allow CAFOs to be permitted within 1.5 miles of an existing residential or commercial subdivision. The state regulations stipulate that CAFOs be no closer to subdivisions than within a one-mile radius.

The county ordinance also works the other way as well by not allowing subdivisions to encroach on existing CAFOs. It states that residential subdivisions proposed after the effective date of the ordinance cannot be located closer than 1.5 miles to any existing CAFO improvements. No new CAFO is allowed under the county ordinance to be located closer than one mile of a city impact area.

The opportunity for public input before a CAFO is permitted is required by Idaho statute. At a minimum, the board of county commissioners must hold at least one public hearing and allow public comment on a proposed CAFO site.

The state allows only members of the public with their primary residence within a 1-mile radius of a proposed CAFO site to provide comment at the hearing. The county ordinance allows residents residing within 1.5 miles to provide comments. The board must consider public comments when deciding whether to approve or reject a proposed site.

The state of Idaho leaves it up to counties to approve or deny CAFO permits. Dairies must apply for county CAFO permits before they can open. In some counties, planning and zoning boards approve or deny the applications, and in other counties commissioners decide.

The state plays an advisory role in the siting of CAFOs. Representatives of DEQ, ISDA, and Idaho Department of Water Resources serve on Idaho's CAFO Site Advisory Team. The team reviews sites proposed for CAFOs, determines environmental risks, and submits site suitability determinations to counties.

County commissioner Kirk Chandler, who farms and ranches north of Weiser and is a member of the Farm Bureau board, also agrees that the county ordinance governing CAFOs should not have more restrictions and regulations than are found in state law.

SunSpuds, a proprietary hybrid Jerusalem artichoke, produce tubers that can be harvested and processed to extract the food ingredient inulin, which is found in everything from energy bars to yogurt. Intrinsic Organics is gearing up to process it first large crop of SunSpuds at the Weiser plant. *Courtesy photo*

Weiser company ready to process first production crop of SunSpuds

Intrinsic Organics positioned to be the only domestic supplier of organic food ingredient

by Steve Lyon

Weiser-based Intrinsic Organics is harvesting its first production crop of SunSpuds grown organically on 400 acres near Weiser, Annex and Caldwell for processing at its newly completed Weiser facility.

The company is poised to be a significant grower and processor of proprietary SunSpuds to extract inulin, a nutritional powerhouse used in many food products. The company grew some SunSpuds last year for testing equipment only.

SunSpuds are a hybrid Jerusalem artichoke variety developed and patented by the company. The plants and the tubers they produce have been extensively researched for more than a decade.

"We have our own variety that we developed over the years. We own it and it is a very cultivable variety of the Jerusalem artichoke," CEO Sot Chimonas said.

With its new processing plant, Intrinsic Organics is positioned to become not only the first domestic producer of inulin in the country but also the only supplier of organic inulin product in the U.S. The U.S. is currently importing over 50 million pounds of inulin per year. Typically, inulin is imported from Europe derived from chicory root, a non-organic and agronomically demanding plant.

Inulin is a dietary fiber and prebiotic with a lot of food uses. The owners of Intrinsic Organics are confident they will find many markets for organic inulin when the processing plant is up to full speed. The inulin extraction process is proprietary, simple and natural, company officials said, requiring only water, heat and minimal processing.

Devin Limb, vice president of marketing, said the company will sell inulin in powder and syrup form, depending on the needs of customers. Inulin is used in everything from ice cream to breads, yogurt, spreads and energy bars, among other food items. Inulin functions also as a fat substitute in margarine and salad dressings. It's also used to replace some of the flour in baked goods.

Intrinsic Organics broke ground on the first phase of its Weiser facility, a 9,000 square-foot processing plant in June of 2017. The Intrinsic Organics facility will be constructed in phases on 36 acres the company purchased in the Weiser Industrial Park. It's estimated that the plant can produce 2.5 million pounds of organic inulin from the current crop of SunSpuds.

The University of Idaho was contracted to develop the best practices for growing and harvesting the SunSpuds in Idaho's soils and climate. The university also looked at the economics of growing the crop in Idaho. USDA backed some loans that made the facility possible.

Intrinsic Organics is growing some SunSpuds on acreage it owns around the processing facility and at locations around the west end of the Treasure Valley. The company at this time is not contracting with farmers but is leasing land to grow the crop without the use of any chemicals.

It takes about five months from planting to tubers that are sized for harvest. The plants, which are tuber-bearing sunflowers, are native to North America do well in the local soils and climate. A hard freeze this fall will start the natural process of putting nutrients back into the tubers.

During the development of the SunSpuds, a non-GMO variety of Jeruselm artichoke, the company contracted with the University of Idaho and University

see ***SUNSPUDS,*** *Page 6*

Weiser-based Intrinsic Organics, which recently finished construction on its storage and processing plant, will extract inulin from these SunSpuds. The company developed the special tuber, a variety of Jerusalem artichoke, to produce an organic food ingredient that is in high demand. *Courtesy photo*

from page 5

Local ag processor gearing up for first production crop of SunSpuds

of Maine to develop the best practices for growing and harvesting the tubers in Idaho's soils and climate. The university also looked at the economics of growing the crop in Idaho. USDA backed some loans that made the facility possible.

The University of Idaho assisted with defining the agronomic requirements for optimum growth and yields, such as irrigation needs, row spacing, nutritional needs and disease resistance, especially for an organic crop.

The university studies showed that SunSpuds have no endemic pests or diseases and is a robust plant. A short season climate trial in Alaska indicated that SunSpuds can be grown in harsh climates.

The company turned to Spudnix to build a specialized potato harvester for the tubers that will be harvested this month and in November. SunSpuds are unique in that they will be harvested again in the spring. The harvested tubers will be placed in cold storage and processed throughout the winter at the Weiser plant.

The facility is currently hiring production workers as it gears up for the fall harvest. The plant will eventually employ 20-30 people at wages that range from about $13 to $16 for production.

Outlook neutral to profitable for crops

Idaho farmers and livestock producers should see break-even or slightly profitable prices this season from most of the crops and beef they raise, according to a recent report by Northwest Farm Credit Services.

The financial cooperative's quarterly Market Snapshot concludes producers of cattle, potatoes, sugar beets, onions, hay and other crops should do better than break-even for this season's crop.

Cattle – Producers should see slightly profitable returns throughout the beef industry as domestic and export demand continues to soften the impacts of growing beef supplies.

However, record cattle on feed inventory is expected to pressure feeder cattle prices and feeder margins lower.

Dairy – Dairy profitability appears to be slightly unprofitable despite slight improvements in milk prices over the period. Normalization of trade with China and the USMCA agreement with Canada and Mexico could provide stability in the markets.

Hay – Alfalfa and timothy producers will likely be profitable. Fundamental supply conditions favor alfalfa hay prices and producer profitability across the West.

However, uncertainty regarding trade looms. Resolution of trade disputes would benefit the hay industry as increasing milk price could support hay prices.

Onions – Onion producers may see break-even returns. Favorable weather conditions allowed harvest to begin at least one week earlier than normal in many areas. Prices remain subdued for yellow onions due to lower-quality onions from California in the supply chain. Red and white onions remain profitable.

Corn – Profitability is currently below breakeven for many producers. Record yield prospects sent prices tumbling to new contract lows as producers entered harvest. Great yields in many areas may offset some of the price decline.

Potatoes – Northwest FCS' 12-month outlook suggests grower returns will remain slightly profitable for uncontracted potatoes and profitable for contracted potatoes. Fresh market (uncontracted) potatoes may slip toward breakeven during harvest. However, uncontracted prices will likely improve for the remainder of the marketing season depending on crop quality and packout.

Sugar Beets – Sugar beet growers should see profitable returns in 2018. Northwest sugar beet producers should benefit from lower ending stocks and sound sugar content.

Wheat – Wheat producers should expect slightly profitable returns with above-average wheat production. Conversely, global supply is projected to decrease, favoring wheat prices.

USDA's projections suggest the 2018-19 season-average farm price for all-wheat will be between $4.70 and $5.50 per bushel. Trade uncertainties and the elevated dollar continue to constrain U.S. export competitiveness in the market.

U.S. wheat growers will see more access to the Canadian market under the new trade deal between the U.S., Mexico and Canada. Wheat is a $417 million crop in Idaho and is the state's fourth largest farm commodity. *File photo*

Wheat farmers, dairies will benefit most from trade deal

This nation's wheat industry fared well in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which was announced Sept. 30 and, if ratified, will replace the 24-year-old NAFTA.

Wheat, which brought in $417 million in cash receipts in Idaho last 2017, is the state's fourth largest farm commodity, behind dairy, beef cattle ($1.8 billion) and potatoes ($955 million).

U.S. potato and beef cattle industry leaders said their industries didn't gain anything from the new agreement, but they also didn't lose any of the favorable trade terms they enjoyed under NAFTA. But the dairy industry was a clear winner in the USMCA, according to the Idaho Farm Bureau.

Under the new agreement, Canada will provide new access for U.S. dairy products, including for fluid milk, cheese, cream, butter, skim milk and powder, and that nation will also eliminate its tariffs on whey and margarine.

The agreement provides U.S. dairy products access to an additional 3.6 percent of Canada's dairy market. The U.S. exported $619 million worth of dairy products to Canada in 2017.

Canada also agreed to grade U.S. wheat imports in the same manner it grades Canadian wheat. According to U.S. wheat industry leaders, U.S. wheat currently shipped to Canada is automatically downgraded to feed wheat, the lowest classification, which also brings the lowest price.

Idaho Grain Producers Association Executive Director Stacey Katseanes Satterlee said the U.S. wheat industry has been working to resolve that issue for a long time.

"We're pleased to see that as part of the announced changes," she said. "It's a huge thing for U.S. wheat growers."

The current NAFTA agreement is critically important for U.S. wheat farmers who depend on the enormous Mexican market that NAFTA built, "But it did have room for improvements, particularly on grain trade with Canada," the National Association of Wheat Growers and U.S. Wheat Associates said in a joint news release.

Canada's grain grading system automatically designates U.S. wheat as the lowest grade simply because it is foreign, the release stated, which "means U.S. farmers producing the highest quality wheat arbitrarily get less value for their crop."

"We will follow the implementation of this commitment closely to ensure U.S. farmers can finally have reciprocal access to the Canadian market," the wheat organizations stated.

For the U.S. potato industry, nothing has changed under the new agreement, Idaho and national spud industry leaders said.

"There is nothing in it that directly touches upon potatoes at all," said Pat Kole, vice president of legal and government affairs for the Idaho Potato Commission.

The U.S. potato industry had hoped the new agreement would address American spud farmers' desire to ship fresh potatoes into all of Mexico. U.S. fresh potatoes are currently only allowed within 26 kilometers (15.5 miles) of Mexico's border with the United States.

That issue is tied up in a Mexican court and it was not addressed in the USMCA, said John Toaspern, chief marketing officer of Potatoes USA.

The new agreement also does not change anything for the U.S. beef cattle industry, said Idaho Cattle Association Executive Vice President Cameron Mulrony.

"There was no major change or affect on the beef industry," he said, adding that was the message U.S. cattlemen were sending all along on the NAFTA re-negotiation: "Don't hurt a good thing."

U.S. beef products already enjoyed basically unfettered access to Canada and Mexico under NAFTA, said Leann Saunders, president of Where Food Comes From, a third-party food verification and certification company that has a lot of beef customers.

"The good news is that will continue under the new trade agreement," she said.

Under USMCA, the U.S. will allow 9,600 metric tons of refined sugar from Canadian sugar beets into this country annually, according to Luther Markwart, executive vice president of the American Sugarbeet Growers Association.

The current agreement on sugar between Mexico and the U.S. will remain the same under USMCA, he said.

Idaho sugar beet farmers brought in $305 million in farm cash receipts last year, ranking that crop as the No. 6 Idaho farm commodity.

The U.S. imports about 3 million metric tons of sugar a year so the 9,600 metric ton amount won't have an impact on U.S. sugar farmers, Markwart said, especially since that could easily be offset by reducing the amount of sugar allowed into the U.S. from Mexico by that same amount.

A U.S. Trade Representative fact sheet on the USMCA said, "While agriculture has generally performed well under NAFTA, important improvements in the agreement will enable food and agriculture to trade more fairly and to expand exports of American agricultural products."

Canada is the top destination for U.S. agricultural products, with $22 billion worth of U.S. ag products shipped there last year, and Mexico is third at $18 billion, behind China ($21 billion).

Mexico and Canada combined purchase 28 percent of all U.S. food and agricultural export in 2017, according to the U.S. Trade Representative's office.

The agreement is expected to be signed by the three nations by the end of November, but it still needs to be ratified by Congress and it also does not yet result in the lifting of the retaliatory tariffs Canada and Mexico imposed on U.S. products.

More than a decade ago local farrier Jim Mason took up the fast-moving and thrilling sport of mounted shooting. Above, Mason is a crack shot as he rounds a barrel with revolver blazing away at targets. Mason rides with the Snake River Rangers Cowboy Mounted Shooters and has been competing at rodeo events for the past 13 years. He took it up after giving roping a try, a cowboy sport that he wasn't crazy about. ***Photo by Zane Davis***

Local farrier loves horses and his job

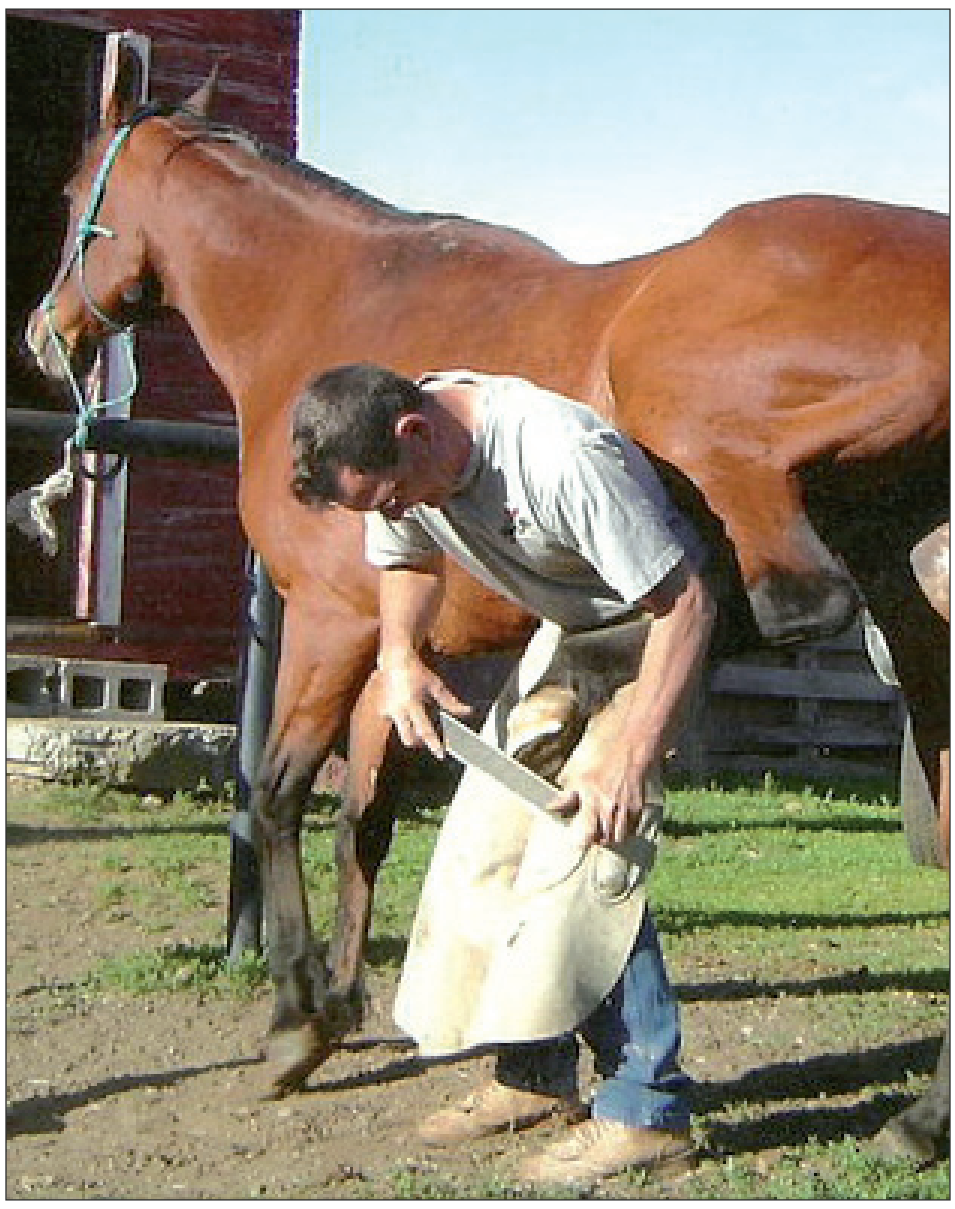
Jim Mason has been caring for horses in the valley for 35 years

by Zane Davis

The leaves are turning and the mornings are brisk. Harvesters are in the fields, harvest trucks occupy the roadways and the road shoulders are littered with onions and sugarbeets.

It must be fall in Weiser! However, the harvest season doesn't only pertain to farmers. Cattlemen all over Washington County are gearing up to bring their cattle herds home from summer range in preparation for winter and calving season.

Just as harvesting of plants requires making sure trucks and tractors are in working order before the harvest commences, ranchers must ensure that their equipment is also tuned up and ready to roll, but in the case of a rancher, one of the most valuable pieces of equipment required to round up cattle is the ranch



Jim Mason plys the trade of a farrier and has been tending to horses for more than 35 years in the Treasure Valley. He also likes to ride horses and shoot at the same time. He started competing in mounted shooting about 13 years ago.

horse.

Horses are not equipment, you say? Well, try locating cattle that have not seen humans since April and currently reside on several thousand acres of land on foot because where the cows are…few vehicles dare to tread.

Horses are a vital part of ranching, and just like farmers check their oil and tires every day, ranchers make sure their trusty steed is feeling well and that their feet are trimmed and their shoes are in good shape to handle the rocky terrain. Wait…shoes? Where do you get shoes for a horse? Is there a special horseshoe cobbler? Well, in a sense there is.

There are individuals that specialize in the care of the feet of horses called farriers (or horseshoers in rancher lingo). Farriers are craftsmen and possess a technical skill that takes training, patience, perseverance and practice to be good at.

Weiser is blessed with one such craftsman in the world of shoeing horses, and he not only is a gifted farrier that possesses all of the above traits, but he is a kind and entertaining person as well. This special farrier is none other than Weiser native Jim Mason.

If Disneyland is the "Happiest Place on Earth," then anyone that knows Jim Mason knows that he should be the mayor of such a happy place, because he is one happy guy.

Mason was born in Weiser 64 years ago, and has been caring for the horses of the Treasure Valley for over 35 years. He says "I love my age and I love horses!"

Mason worked for the Rocking M Ranch calving out 300 head of heifers when he was in his teens and realized that although it was good to have a job, it was better to have a steady job, and seasonal ranch work was not steady.

He soon realized that there was a real shortage of people that could shoe horses, and began to learn the profession. Pat Palmer and Hugh Mack both played a huge part in teaching Jim the business.

When asked if he has ever had any other professions, he responds in typical jovial Mason fashion, "I was a paperboy when I was six."

He also adds, "I worked anywhere I could. I have mowed lawns, worked in the dairies, worked on ranches and even waited tables at the Smokehouse."

Working with horses every day may seem like an idyllic career, but not all horses are interested or familiar with getting a pedicure. As a result, the job can be exceedingly dangerous.

When asked if he had ever had any accidents, Mason nonchalantly stated, "I got kicked in the head once with both hind feet."

Obviously, Mason is tough as nails and a real cowboy. He has passed those traits down to his three children: Ty, a rancher and fellow horseshoer, Dallie, a professional bullrider, and McKatee, also a rancher.

Mason beams when he talks of his children and states, "I'm very proud of all of my kids" Mason has a lot to be proud of and now extends that pride to his two grandchildren, Zale (11) and Rozin (6).

Not only is Mason an all-around good guy and a fantastic farrier, he is also an accomplished member of the Snake River Rangers Cowboy Mounted Shooters.

Mason started competing in mounted shooting about 13 years ago. He had tried his hand at roping, but he "wasn't crazy about it." He started attending shooting practices; changing the balloons and helping out.

Eventually, he was convinced to try it, and he started to practice also, and learned alongside his good friend, Terry Morrison, so "that made it fun."

Mason competes in the senior 2 division of mounted shooting and has traveled all over the West to shoots and has brought home the coveted gold buckle (and cash) eight times.

He also participates in an exhibition by the Snake River Rangers Cowboy Mounted Shooters all three nights of the Weiser Valley Round-Up rodeo in July every year. It's full of fun and excitement, and Mason is always the hometown crowd favorite.

Mason is known for his happy demeanor and positive personality. When asked, "Why are you always so happy?" he replies, "I got it from my mom. She was always happy."

He adds, "I have bad days, but I always try to overcome them and turn the bad into good," he said. "I get to work with nice horses, and neat people, and that makes me happy."

Western Idaho FFA club officials include, from left to right, President Mia Stender, Treasurer Jordan Paradis, Sentinel Drew Lyman, Reporter Allison Church, Vice President Layne Murdock and Secretary Anna DeVries. Stender loves that every FFA trip, no matter how small, is full of adventure and discovery. *Courtesy photo*

High school senior is a big booster of agriculture

She plans to teach importance of ag to future generations

by Nicole Miller

Mia Stender, a senior at Weiser High School, has been an active member of the FFA since her freshman year of high school.

She's maintained her supervised agricultural experience with her grass-fed cattle operation throughout high school as well as working two part-time jobs.

Through her experience, Stender has learned that agriculture is key to every aspect of our modern lives. Stender represents the future of agriculture as she plans to pursue a degree in agricultural education and continues to teach the importance of ag to future generations.

Stender first became interested in agricultural education at freshman high school orientation her eighth grade year. She knew from that point on that the FFA program and ag classes at Weiser High School would be a key part of her future.

Stender has held multiple offices representing the Weiser FFA program. She has been the chapter reporter and is currently chapter student advisor. She has earned her state degree, first place district soils individual and team, second place district agronomy team, ninth place state dairy judging team, and eighth place district individual dairy judging.

Currently, Stender is the western Idaho district president, a title that required a test of her knowledge of FFA facts and history as well as an interview with the past office holders and a member from each chapter within the western Idaho district.

Stender's duties as the western Idaho district president include planning and implementing district activities and attending district contests, scoring, and putting together workshops for each chapter within the district.

Stender enjoys the trips for FFA the most. The hours spent bonding with not only each other as they work towards a common goal but also with other students from all over the state are truly unforgettable.

Through FFA, Stender said she has been able to expand her knowledge about not only agriculture, but about the beautiful state of Idaho and the many natural resources it has to offer.

Stender feels that agricultural education is important because everything revolves around agriculture. It's surprising to Stender how underrated it is when you consider how crucial it is to the way we live.

"Not everyone is aware of the role that ag plays into our daily lives. It doesn't just involve food on the table, it's the roof over our heads, the clothes on our backs, and just about everything else surrounding us," Stender said.

Stender also represents Weiser High School as a member of the National Honor Society, Associated Student Body President and FHLA Secretary. After she graduates next May, Stender plans to continue her education at the University of Idaho in the fall of 2019, where she will pursue an ag ed degree. She hopes to continue to spread an awareness of the importance of agriculture to our everyday lives to future generations.

Stender believes that students should get involved with FFA because it offers unique opportunities to not only expand their knowledge on agriculture, but also allows them to learn through hands-on and real world experience. Through these experiences students can be exposed to many career choices.

From vocational options including welding, floral design, and range management, among others, to the many scholarship prospects unique to agriculture, Ag education can open doors for all.

It's hard to stay current about what's going on outside your front door

"My grandfather used to say that once in your life you need a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman and a preacher but every day, three times a day, you need a farmer." - Brenda Schoepp

A growing mountain of sugarbeets

Harvest season is wrapping up around Weiser for a number of crops, including sugarbeets. The harvested beets are taken to beet dumps all over the Treasure Valley near where sugarbeets are grown. The growing mountain of sugarbeets, above, is located off 9th Street in west Weiser near the wastewater treatment plant. They will be trucked to the sugar plant in Nampa for processing. This winter, those beets will be turned into sugar on the table. *Photo by Steve Lyon*